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AUTHOR Maples, Catherine C.; Owings, Thomas G.
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ABSTRACT

In 1982, a study was conducted at Calhoun State Community College (CSCC) to determine causes of student withdrawal and factors influencing re-enrollment. Questionnaires were administered to 985 individuals who withdrew from on-campus programs during the 1981-82 academic year; of these, 37 were returned by mail and 254 were completed in person or during telephone interviews. The study revealed that: (1) only 13.7% of the respondents saw a counselor prior to their decision to withdraw; (2) 25.4% withdrew after their first quarter at CSCC and 16.5% withdrew after their second quarter; (3) 51.9% indicated that they were attending CSCC to earn a degree or diploma, and 25.4% had planned to take a few courses and transfer; (4) 27.8% were enrolled in one course and 18.9% in two courses the quarter they withdrew; (5) 26.5% of the respondents chose "other" as their reason for withdrawing (e.g., moving, transferring to another school, and medical reasons), while 21.6% indicated "personal/family problems," and 14.8% cited "change in work hours"; (6) the primary barriers to re-enrollment were essentially the same as the reasons given for withdrawal; (7) 66% planned to re-enroll at CSCC; and (8) of the respondents, 52.9% were female, 47.4% were working full-time, 87.3% were white, 46.7% were between the ages of 20 and 29, 54% were single, and 69.4% were receiving financial aid. The survey instrument is included. (DAB)

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A STUDY OF STUDENTS WITHDRAWING FROM ON-CAMPUS PROGRAMS AT CALHOUN COMMUNITY COLLEGE 1981-82

by

Catherine C. Maples
Director, Institutional Research
Calhoun Community College
Decatur, AL 35602
205-350-9902

Thomas G. Owings
Institute of Higher Education
The University of Alabama
University, AL 35486
205-348-7770

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ABSTRACT

This survey of students of John C. Calhoun State Community College in Decatur, Alabama was conducted for the purpose of collecting and analyzing data on students withdrawing from on-campus programs during the academic year 1981-82. In an effort to determine causes and possible ways in which the college could assist in their re-enrollment, data for the study were collected through the use of a two-page questionnaire (see Appendix A). The Institute of Higher Education Research and Services (IHERS) at The University of Alabama assisted Calhoun Community College in the preparation of the questionnaire and provided computer analysis and interpretation of findings.

Most of the students that withdrew did so because of reasons such as moving; transferring to another school; getting married; medical reasons and job-related reasons. The biggest barrier to their re-enrollment was essentially the same reasons for their withdrawal, even though one-fourth of those surveyed did not answer this question, possibly indicating there were no major barriers to their re-enrollment.

Nearly two-thirds of the students (66.0%) planned to re-enroll at Calhoun, and more than two out of five planned to re-enroll the next quarter. The factors most often indicated that would influence their re-enrollment were more off-campus courses and "other" reasons.

Background on Student Attrition

Student attrition rates for junior colleges have been reported as higher than those for four-year colleges (Astin, 1972; Gresty, Hunt, Kleinman and Golay, 1980; and Ostin, 1972).

Many reasons have been offered as to why junior college students are more likely to drop out of school, such as lower motivational and academic preparation levels (Astin, 1972) or financial and personal problems (Demos, 1968). Creamer (1980) and Chickering and Hannah (1969) concluded that colleges may offer services which may lower the attrition rate; i.e., counseling services, financial aid and faculty availability.

Other studies suggest that mission and size of the institution affect retention (Kamens, 1971) and that larger institutions with a diversity of programs are more successful in student retention. The research of Tinto (1975) and Terezini and Pascarella (1977) have indicated social integration within the institution and student commitment to receiving an education are variables of utmost importance in predicting attrition rates.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the withdrawal situation at Calhoun Community College, including withdrawal rate and student demographic and attitudinal factors. An effort was made to discover if there were services the college could offer to encourage students to return to Calhoun College in the future. The study was conducted by the Office of Institutional Research at the College and assisted by the Institute of Higher Education through Title III funding.

Definitions

Withdrawing Student--A student who drops all classes for which he is enrolled in any given quarter.

Limitations

Because of lack of administrative and support personnel at extension sites, it was decided to conduct the study for students who withdraw from on-campus programs only. The correct procedure for withdrawing is for a student to either come by or telephone the Records Office. While students waited for a clerk to process their withdrawal by on-line computer, they were asked to complete a two page survey form. A mailout was sent to some students during October 1981 because of a delay in getting the study started.

There were some students who primarily attend extension classes who withdrew through the on-campus Records Office. Their forms were included in the study.

The study included only those students who completely withdrew from college after the official drop and add period of each quarter (first three weeks of classes). The reason for eliminating this period of time from the study was due to problems in the on-line computer system.

Methodology

Development of the Survey Instrument

The Director of Institutional Research at Calhoun Community College (Dr. Cathy Maples) and a representative from the Institute of Higher Education,

The University of Alabama (Dr. Tom Owings) reviewed the literature on exit interviews, student follow-up and withdrawal studies and developed a 20 item survey form (see Appendix A). The Advisory Committee for the Withdrawal Study met and reacted to the draft instrument. After revisions were made, the survey form was printed in two colors: green for use in the Records Office and blue for mailout. A cover letter from the President of the institution was printed to be attached to the blue form.

Training of Records Office Personnel

Dr. Tom Owings conducted training sessions with the Records Office personnel in order to acquaint them with items on the survey form and to aid them in getting students to respond to the instrument. Follow-up to this training was conducted in the winter and spring quarters to determine if there were problems with the study.

Collection of Data

Since the study was begun approximately three weeks after the drop and add period, it was decided to collect as many survey forms as possible from those who withdrew in person and mail the others. There were 68 forms completed in the Records Office. Of the remaining withdrawals 37 forms were returned. During the winter and spring quarter all of the survey instruments were collected in person or through telephone interview.

Survey Results

A total of 291 individuals completed questionnaires that were usable for analysis. Of this number, 37 questionnaires were returned from the mailout; 254 were questionnaires from those that withdrew in person or via telephone.

Table 1 shows the number and percent of withdrawals as compared to enrollment by day and evening program during the 1981-82 academic year.

TABLE 1

Number and Percent of Students Withdrawing from College as Compared to Those Enrolled by Quarter and by Program

	DAY			EVENING			TOTAL		
	ENRLD	WD	%	ENRLD	WD	%	ENRLD	WD	%
Fall 81	2,347	238	10.1	897	186	20.0	3,244	424	13.0
Winter 81	2,099	147	7.0	755	146	19.3	2,854	293	10.2
Spring 82	2,018	151	7.4	960	117	12.1	2,978	268	8.9

Table 2 shows the number of withdrawals, number of respondents to the survey and percent of response.

TABLE 2

Number of Students Withdrawing as Compared to Number of Respondents to the Survey

	DAY			EVENING			TOTAL		
	# WD	# RESP	%	# WD	# RESP	%	# WD	# RESP	%
Fall 81	238	44	18.4	186	61	32.7	424	105	24.7
Winter 81	147	70	47.6	146	37	25.3	293	107	36.5
Spring 82	151	41	27.1	117	38	32.4	268	79	29.4

Almost all respondents answered nearly every question. Where respondents chose not to answer an item these are no noted in the appropriate place. Unless otherwise noted, frequencies should total 291 and percentage should total 100.00. In some cases percentages may total slightly more or less than 100.00 due to rounding.

CALHOUN COMMUNITY COLLEGE
STUDENT WITHDRAWAL STUDY
1981-82

Method of Withdrawal	Frequency	Percent
Mailout	37	12.7
In-Person	254	87.3

Most questionnaires completed during the year were from students who withdrew via telephone or in person.

Have you seen a counselor about withdrawal?	Frequency	Percent
no	241	82.8
yes	40	13.7
no answer	10	3.4

The majority of students that withdrew during the year did not see a counselor prior to their decision to quit school. Only about one in every eight students that withdrew did talk with a counselor.

1. How many quarters, including this quarter, have you been enrolled at Calhoun?	Frequency	Percent
1	74	25.4
2	48	16.5
3	36	12.4
4	31	10.7
5	20	6.9
6	23	7.9
7	10	3.4
8	10	3.4
9	18	6.2
no answer	21	7.2

Just slightly over one-fourth of the students that withdrew during the year indicated that this was their first quarter enrolled at Calhoun. Another 16.5% indicated that this was their second quarter, and 12.4% said this was their third quarter enrolled.

2. What was your primary goal in attending Calhoun?

	Frequency	Percent
earn a degree or diploma	151	51.9
take a few courses and transfer	71	24.4
learn a skill	11	3.8
upgrade job skills (non-degree)	18	6.2
take courses for self-improvement	32	11.0
other	3	1.0
no answer	5	1.7

The majority of students (51.9%) who withdrew indicated they were attending Calhoun in order to earn a degree or diploma. An additional 24.4% said they were attending in order to take a few courses and transfer.

3. What was your primary reason for enrolling at Calhoun?

	Frequency	Percent
close to home	113	38.8
low cost	5	17.5
my friends attend Calhoun	4	1.4
Calhoun has a good program of study	70	24.1
the courses are available when I need them	39	13.4
other	11	3.8
no answer	3	1.0

The reason most often given by students for choosing Calhoun was "close to home" (38.8%), followed by "good program of study" (24.1%). Also receiving high response rates were "low cost" (17.5%), and "the courses are available when I need them" (13.4%).

4. When were the majority of your classes scheduled this quarter?

	Frequency	Percent
day (on campus)	155	53.3
evening (on campus)	78	26.8
Lee High	37	12.7
Redstone Arsenal	6	2.1
Stone Middle	9	3.1
Technical School	2	.7
no answer	4	1.4

More than half of the students withdrawing during the winter quarter were day students (53.3%). The evening students accounted for 26.8% of the withdrawals.

5. How many hours were you registered for this quarter?	Frequency	Percent
1	1	.3
3	4	1.4
4	2	.7
5	71	24.4
6	11	3.8
7	2	.7
8	4	1.4
9	2	.7
10	36	12.4
11	12	4.1
12	31	10.7
13	5	1.7
14	4	1.4
15	47	16.2
16	25	8.6
17	7	2.4
18	5	1.7
19	1	.3
20	6	2.1
21	3	1.0
no answer	12	4.1

Just slightly over one-fourth (26.3%) of the students who withdrew were registered for 5 or less quarter hours; another 19.0% were enrolled for 60 to 10 quarter hours; and 34.1% were taking between 11 and 15 hours.

6. How many courses were you registered for this quarter?	Frequency	Percent
1	81	27.8
2	55	18.9
3	71	24.4
4	52	17.9
5	14	4.8
6	1	.3
8	2	.7
9	1	.3
no answer	14	4.8

The largest number of students responding indicated they were enrolled for one course (27.8%). The next largest number of students withdrawing were enrolled for three courses (24.4%), followed by two courses (18.9%) then four courses (17.9%). Only 18 students that responded said they were taking more than four courses.

7. What was the primary reason for dropping your course(s) this quarter?

	Frequency	Percent
got a job	36	12.4
change in work hours	43	14.8
personal/family problems	6	21.6
having academic trouble (overload)	2	7.2
financial problems	12	4.1
dissatisfied with course	27	9.3
transportation problems	8	2.7
course was not transferable	2	.7
other	77	26.5
no answer	2	.7

The most frequently indicated category for withdrawing from Calhoun during the year was "other" (26.5%). Examples of "other" reasons that occurred most often were: moving; transferred to another school; getting married; medical reasons; and required too much time while working.

Slightly more than one-fifth (21.6%) of those surveyed said they withdrew because of "personal/family problems." Next followed "change in work hours," (14.8%), and "got a job," (12.4%).

8. Do you plan to re-enroll at Calhoun in the future?

	Frequency	Percent
yes	192	66.0
no	23	7.9
don't know	74	25.4

Approximately two-thirds of the students who withdrew indicated that they planned to re-enroll in Calhoun. Another 25.4% were not sure. Less than one out of twelve said they would not re-enroll at Calhoun.

9. If you plan to re-enroll at Calhoun, when do you think it will be?

	Frequency	Percent
next quarter	127	43.6
within this same school year	22	7.6
a year from now	10	3.4
as soon as I get my problem(s) resolved	32	11.0
don't know	6	22.3
no answer	35	12.0

While 43.6% of the students planned to re-enroll at Calhoun the next quarter, another 22.3% were not sure. Eleven percent of those surveyed felt that they would re-enroll when their problem was resolved.

10. What is the primary barrier to your re-enrolling at Calhoun in the future?

	Frequency	Percent
lack of availability of classes	38	13.1
lack of study time	42	14.4
financial problems	25	8.6
personel/family problems	43	14.8
dissatisfied with instruction	9	3.1
courses not offered close enough to home	12	4.1
other	52	17.9
no answer	70	24.1

Nearly one-fourth (24.1%) of those surveyed did not answer this question possibly indicating there were no major barriers to their re-enrollment. The primary barrier for re-enrollment was the "other" category. Reasons frequently given for "other" included: getting married; transferred to another school; medical reasons; job-related reasons (such as time conflict); and required too much time while working.

11. What one factor would most influence you to re-enroll at Calhoun?

	Frequency	Percent
more off-campus courses offered	49	21.7
more Saturday classes	12	4.1
improved instructional quality	18	6.2
more parking facilities	15	5.2
more student activities	5	1.7
more child care facilities	5	1.7
more general educational classes	22	7.6
more occupational classes	25	8.6
more financial aid	28	9.6
more counseling	5	1.7
other	42	14.4
no answer	65	22.3

Even though more than one-fifth of those surveyed did not answer this question, the factor most often given that would influence re-enrollment was "other." Examples of "other" reasons frequently given were: scheduling of classes different; more student activities; and changing of location of center. There were also some positive reasons given. Some students indicated that there was nothing they would want changed, and several others indicated they would re-enroll if they ever moved back to town.

12. What is the primary factor about the college you liked?

	Frequency	Percent
good academic program	71	24.4
good faculty	27	9.3
low cost	53	18.2
friendly atmosphere	29	10.0
courses offered convenient to my schedule	29	10.0
courses offered convenient to my home or work	54	18.6
other	4	1.4
no answer	24	8.2

Nearly one out of four (24.4%) liked the good academic program; 18.6% liked the convenience to home or work; and 18.2% liked the low cost.

13. What is your sex?

	Frequency	Percent
male	123	42.3
female	154	52.9
no answer	14	4.8

A larger percentage of females (52.9%) than males (42.3%) answered the questionnaire.

14. What is your working status?

	Frequency	Percent
part-time	78	26.8
full-time	138	47.4
no answer	75	25.8

Nearly one-half (47.4%) of the respondents were working full-time; another 26.8% were working part-time.

15. What is your race/ethnic background?

	Frequency	Percent
white	254	87.3
black	21	7.2
other	1	.3
no answer	15	5.2

Most of the students withdrawing from Calhoun were white.

16. How old were you on your last birthday?

	Frequency	Percent
19 or under	83	28.5
20 - 29	136	46.7
30 - 39	37	12.7
40 - 49	14	4.8
50 - 59	7	2.4
no answer	14	4.8

Of the withdrawing students, the largest percentaged (46.7%) were between the ages of 20 to 29. Another 28.5% were 19 or under.

17. Before this quarter, how many other times have you withdrawn from Calhoun?

	Frequency	Percent
0	216	74.2
1	51	17.5
2	4	1.4
3	3	1.0
4	1	.3
5	23	7.9
no answer	16	5.5

Almost three-fourths (74.2%) of the students that withdrew during the year had never withdrawn from Calhoun and another 17.5% had withdrawn only one other time. There does not seem to be a problem with "repeat withdrawals" at Calhoun.

18. What is your current marital status?

	Frequency	Percent
single	157	54.0
married	91	31.3
widowed	3	1.0
separated	1	.3
divorced	23	7.9
no answer	16	5.5

The majority of students (54.0%) were single.

19. What is your residence? (county)	Frequency	Percent
Lawrence	16	5.5
Limestone	53	18.2
Morgan	93	32.0
Madison	103	35.4
Marshall	2	.7
Montgomery	1	.3
Dekalb	1	.3
Lauderdale	2	.7
Cullman	1	.3
No answer	19	6.5

Most of the students who withdrew were either from Madison County (35.4%) or Morgan County (32.0%).

20. What is your primary source of financial aid?	Frequency	Percent
CETA program	1	.3
BEOG or Pell Grant	32	11.0
SEOG (Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant)	0	0
Educational Loan	2	.7
Social Security Educational Benefits	9	3.1
Veteran's Administration Educational Benefits	15	5.2
Alabama Student Incentive Grant	0	0
Work-Study Program	6	2.1
Vocational Rehabilitation	0	0
Scholarship	3	1.0
Not receiving financial aid	202	69.4
No answer	21	7.2

Almost seven out of every ten students that withdrew during the year did not receive any kind of financial aid.

Summary

This survey yielded some interesting and valuable information for the college. Of the total number of students surveyed, about one-fourth indicated that this was their first time in attendance at Calhoun. Most of the withdrawals (80.1%) were day and/or evening students and three-fourths that withdrew were attending Calhoun to either earn a degree or diploma, or to take a few courses and transfer. More than four out of five of the students that withdrew did not see a counselor before they dropped out. In terms of number of credit hours taken, 49.9% of the withdrawals were taking 11 or less quarter hours (considered part-time) and 27.8% were registered for one course; 18.9% - two courses; 24.4% - three courses; and 17.9% - four courses.

Most of the students that withdrew did so becasue of reasons such as moving, transferred to another school; getting married; medical reasons and job-related reasons. The biggest barrier to their re-enrollment was essentially the same reasons for their withdrawal, even though one-fourth of those surveyed did not answer this question possibly indicating that there were no major barriers to their re-enrollment.

Nearly two-thirds of the students (66.0%) planned to re-enroll at Calhoun, and more than two out of five planned to re-enroll the next quarter. The factors most often indicated that would influence their re-enrollment were more off-campus courses and "other" reasons.

During the academic year, more females (52.9%) than males withdrew, and more of the students that withdrew were working full-time (47.4%) than part-time. Nearly nine out of ten of the withdrawals were white, and the largest percentage (46.7%) were between the ages of 20-29. Almost three-fourths of the students indicated that they had never withdrawn before,

and the majority (54.0%) were single. Nearly seventy percent of those that withdrew were not receiving financial aid of any kind, and the largest number of dropouts were from either Madison or Morgan counties.

Conclusion

The Calhoun Community College Student Withdrawal Study represents the results of a survey of students that withdrew from the college during the academic year 1981-82. During the year the findings seem to indicate that about an equal number of students that withdrew were taking one, two or three or four courses, were working full-time, and this was their first or second time in attendance and first time to withdraw. Nearly two-thirds of students indicated they probably would re-enroll in Calhoun. Most students were not highly critical of the college; the main reasons for wtihdrawal were not reasons controlled by the college.

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APPENDIX A

CALHOUN COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Student Withdrawal Questionnaire

Date of withdrawal_____
mo. day year

Have you seen a counselor about withdrawal?

1. no
2. yes_____
specify

As part of the withdrawal process at Calhoun, you are asked to complete this questionnaire. Please circle only one answer for each question. Thank you for your cooperation. Please do not identify yourself on the questionnaire.

1. How many quarters, including this quarter, have you been enrolled at Calhoun? ____

2. What was your primary goal in attending Calhoun?
   1. earn a degree or diploma
   2. take a few courses and transfer
   3. learn a skill
   4. upgrade job skills (non-degree)
   5. take courses for self-improvement
   6. other_____
   specify

3. What was your primary reason for enrolling at Calhoun?
   1. close to home
   2. low cost
   3. my friends attend Calhoun
   4. Calhoun has a good program of study
   5. the courses are available when I need them
   6. other_____
   specify

4. When were the majority of your classes scheduled this quarter?
   1. day (on campus)
   2. evening (on campus)
   3. Lee High
   4. Redstone Arsenal
   5. Stone Middle
   6. Technical school

5. How many hours were you registered for this quarter? ____

6. How many courses were you registered for this quarter? ____

7. What was the primary reason for dropping your course(s) this quarter?
   1. got a job
   2. change in work hours
   3. personal/family problems
   4. having academic trouble (overload)
   5. financial problems
   6. dissatisfied with course
   7. transportation problems
   8. course was not transferable
   9. other_____
   specify

8. Do you plan to re-enroll at Calhoun in the future?
   1. yes
   2. no
   3. don't know

9. If you plan to re-enroll at Calhoun, when do you think it will be?
   1. next quarter
   2. within this same school year
   3. a year from now
   4. as soon as I get my problem(s) resolved
   5. don't know

10. What is the primary barrier to your re-enrolling at Calhoun in the future?
    1. lack of availability of classes
    2. lack of study time
    3. financial problems
    4. personal/family problems
    5. dissatisfied with instruction
    6. courses not offered close enough to home
    7. other_____
    specify

(Over)

11. What one factor would most influence you to re-enroll at Calhoun?

1. more off-campus courses offered
2. more Saturday classes
3. improved instructional quality
4. more parking facilities
5. more student activities
6. more child care facilities
7. more general educational classes
8. more occupational classes
9. more financial aid
10. more counseling
11. other_____
specify

12. What is the primary factor about the college you liked?

1. good academic program
2. good faculty
3. low cost
4. friendly atmosphere
5. courses offered convenient to my schedule
6. courses offered convenient to my home or work
7. other_____
specify

13. What is your sex?

1. male
2. female

14. What is your working status?

1. working part-time (less than 35 hours per week)
2. working full-time (35 or more hours per week)

15. What is your race/ethnic background?

1. white
2. black
3. other _____
specify

16. How old were you on your last birthday?

1. 19 or under
2. 20-29
3. 30-39
4. 40-49
5. 50-59
6. 60 or over

17. Before this quarter, how many other times have you withdrawn from Calhoun? ____

18. What is your current marital status?

1. single (never married)
2. married
3. widowed
4. separated
5. divorced

19. What is your residence?

_____
city

_____
county

20. What is your primary source of financial aid?

1. CETA program
2. BEOG or Pell Grant
3. SEOG (Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant)
4. Educational Loan
5. Social Security Educational Benefits
6. Veteran's Administration Educational Benefits
7. Alabama Student Incentive Grant
8. Work-Study Program
9. Vocational Rehabilitation
10. Scholarship_____
specify
11. not receiving financial aid

Comments:

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